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Current Issue

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Abstract

This essay investigates some ways in which affect is deployed in historical cinema to produce distinctive experiences of temporality. It argues that the experience of watching historical film is irreducibly and originarily asynchronous, and that affect – including emotion and mood – produces a circuit of attachment between the present time of viewing and the represented past. I contrast a mainstream cinematic retelling of Homer's *Iliad*, Petersen's *Troy* (2004), where emotion is used to repair temporal disjuncture, to Ferris's more interesting Homeric film, *Penelope* (2009), which explores the experience of asynchrony itself, both through the subjective time of waiting and through an investigation of the "timelessness" of the classical.

To watch historical film is to form an attachment, in the present time of viewing, with a represented and/or imagined past. Present and past both participate in the 'now' of viewing, which is a fundamentally anachronistic and transtemporal experience: it is an experience of "a dis-located time of the present", to quote Derrida's meditation on Hamlet's "the time is out of joint" in *Specters of Marx*. The viewer of historical film is situated:

at the joining of a radically dis-jointed time, without certain conjunction. Not a time whose joinings are negated, broken, mistreated, dysfunctional, disadjusted, according to a *dys*- of negative opposition and dialectical disjunction, but a time without *certain* joining or determinable conjunction. [1]

The experience of time that we have when we watch historical films is one which is originarily and irreducibly "out of joint" or dis-located; we experience the "now" of viewing as a time "without ... determinable conjunction". Yet, as Derrida goes on to write, history – and, I would add, historical film – *can* consist in "repairing, with effects of conjuncture, the temporal disjoining". [2] As viewers, we experience time as out of joint, but different filmic modes respond differently to this irreducible disjunction: by exploring or by repairing the disjoining; through techniques which emphasise disjuncture or techniques which centre conjunction. [3]

As the word "conjunction" suggests, Derrida's model of temporality allows for cross-temporal attachment: the term "attachment", in particular, links the question of anachronism (where two time periods are attached to one another across a temporal break) to the question of affect (a viewer becoming affectively attached to a film). In this essay I investigate how emotion, and other forms of affect, function to attach viewers to the worlds represented in historical film, and how, in so doing, they produce distinctive modes of transtemporal experience.

Here I draw on recent work in literary studies where, following Dipesh Chakrabarty's revaluing of anachronism in his 2000 book *Provincializing Europe*, scholars have been developing theories of temporality which are non-linear, non-sequential, and sufficiently complex to account for the experience of reading or viewing texts from the past – broadly, rethinking what Rita Felski calls "transtemporal connection" and medieval scholar Carolyn Dinshaw calls *asynchrony*. [4] In Felski's and Dinshaw's work, the notion of asynchrony is intriguingly bound up with the notion of attachment. Felski borrows the notion from actor-network theory, citing Bruno Latour as saying that "emancipation does not mean 'freed from bonds', but *well-attached*", [5] but gives it her own, aesthetic, inflection. She argues throughout *The Uses of Literature and The Limits of Critique* that attachment, as opposed to critical detachment, is valuable because of its capacity to orient us towards particular aspects of texts and thus to "sponsor new forms of identification, subjectivity, and perceptual possibility". [6] It is this notion of attachment as opening up perceptual and temporal possibilities that I draw on here.

In her important book *How Soon Is Now?*, Dinshaw brings together the notions of asynchrony and attachment when she writes of "fostering temporalities other than the narrowly sequential", to account for how "different time

frames or temporal systems collid[e] in a single moment of *now*,” so that “the present moment of *now* is full and attached rather than empty and free-floating”. Her book:

explore[s] forms of desirous, embodied being that are out of sync with the ordinarily linear measurements of everyday life, that engage heterogeneous temporalities or that precipitate out of time altogether ... The interrelations between desire, bodies, and the *now* create a broad framework for my concerns. [7]

In this essay, similarly, I examine forms of embodied viewing of historical film which “engage heterogeneous temporalities”, looking at how temporality and transtemporal attachments are produced affectively out of the originary anachrony which characterises the experience of viewing historical film. My focus will be on a 2009 Croatian-Australian film, *Penelope*. Before turning to the film itself, I will briefly explain how mainstream historical fiction film uses emotion for historical conjunction: this is the normative context to which *Penelope* responds.

Mainstream historical cinema necessarily participates in an asynchronic temporality as it brings together the represented past with the present time of viewing. However, it tends to disavow that asynchrony by, in Derrida’s words, “repairing, with effects of conjuncture, the temporal disjoining”, and it does so through its use of emotion.

In *The Particulars of Rapture: Towards an Aesthetics of the Affects*, Charles Altieri divides the terrain of affect into four sub-divisions: feelings, moods, emotions, and passions. He argues that emotions are:

affects involving the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification. [8]

Emotions, for Altieri, are necessarily narrative: they involve the subject who experiences them in the construction of a “particular cause” for the emotion, and in so doing they suggest appropriate forms of action and/or identification. Historical films which deploy emotion to attach viewers to their past worlds, then, will do so through an establishment of cause, narrative action, and identification.

Mainstream historical film typically uses emotion to produce “effects of conjuncture”. Any film that tells a story about the past for a contemporary audience has to negotiate a tension between sameness and difference, closeness and distance, conjuncture and disjunction. Certain aspects of the world will be constructed as “shared” between past and present, and others as markedly different. The shared aspects connect us to the characters through identification, while the markers of difference allow us to recognise the film as being about the past. The most-emphasised marks of historical distance will often be visual, while emotions, and the narrative scripts to which they refer, will be constructed as shared between past and present: this both attaches us to the characters and constructs certain emotions, attitudes and narratives as “timeless”, in that – unlike the period details of costume and setting – they transcend context and function transtemporally to conjoin the present and the past.

Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy* (2004) is just such a film. In it, the visual detail spectacularises an unfamiliar, past world, while the narrative structure, driven by the emotional motivations of the characters (constructed as familiar, not historically distant), engages the audience and produces an investment in the outcome of the film. Thus: Menelaus experiences an affect (anger); out of this, he constructs an attitude which establishes a particular cause (he is angry because Helen has run away with Paris); this situates him within a narrative and generates action (he will go to war with Troy) and identification (we want, or do not want, Menelaus to get what he wants). Emotion and identification attach us to the world of the film.

Historical fiction which uses emotion and identification to create a link between the reader and a historical world has been criticised on the basis that it collapses the difference between past and present by imposing contemporary emotional and narrative norms onto the historical world of the fiction. Whether this is always the case, it certainly is in *Troy*, perhaps most visibly in the absence of same-sex attraction from the film’s world: specifically, Petersen’s Achilles and Patroclus are cousins rather than lovers. For some viewers, the attempt to attach us to the world of the film failed because it did not acknowledge our pre-existing attachments to specific past emotional possibilities which we saw Petersen’s film as overwriting. [9]

Troy thus manipulates the out-of-joint structure of historical time by using emotion and identification to connect viewers to its world and invest them in its narratives, producing a “now” which attempts to smooth over historical difference. In strong contrast is the film I will turn to for the rest of this essay: *Penelope*. This is another Homeric retelling, but one which experiments with other possibilities for using originary anachrony to produce a different affective experience of temporality in the audience.

Ben Ferris’s *Penelope* (2009) explores the subjective experience of Penelope, the wife of Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*, as she awaits his return. The film, which has been described as “sit[ting] somewhere between art gallery installation, experimental film, and box office”, [10] does not follow conventional narrative models of character, action, temporality and causality; there is almost no dialogue; the pace is hypnotically slow; and the film is carefully visually and aurally composed. Shot with a steadicam in long takes of up to eight-and-a-half minutes and set in “a mythic time and space”, [11] the film weaves seamlessly between scenes of memory, fantasy, dream and waking life, producing complex effects in relation to both historical and subjective time.

Again unlike *Troy*, which represents the Trojan War as if it took place in an actual period in history (the late Bronze Age) and whose promotional materials stressed the fidelity of its production design to archaeological knowledge of that period, *Penelope* is deliberately and structurally asynchronous in its visual representation of Penelope’s world. Some visual aspects of the film seem to place us firmly in the twentieth century: Odysseus smokes filter cigarettes and wears camouflage pants. Others, such as the suitors banqueting on suckling pig with ornate metal goblets, are faux-medieval; others still (especially the scene where Penelope’s handmaidens put her to bed) look like an Alma-Tadema painting, a Victorian version of the classical past characterised by white drapery, white columns, and white women’s bodies.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

This asynchronic setting, hovering between historical and mythic time, chimes with one of the most influential definitions of ‘the classic’, which has been registered both on a quotidian level – a text is called a classic if it ‘passes the test of time’ – and in more complex ways by classical scholars who track the capacity of ancient texts to enable transtemporal connections and to short-circuit linear time by addressing readers in their present, from the past. [12] The category of the ‘classical’ itself, then, implies a mixed ‘now’, an out-of-joint temporality, which is visually reflected in Ferris’s film.

The film also explores subjective temporality, representing the experience of waiting as a multiply-attached ‘now’. In one sequence about fourteen minutes into the film, we see Penelope sit at a piano and begin playing. The camera circles her head and we hear the sound of the music she is playing, as well as her breath, until her dark hair fills the screen entirely. We pan left out of the darkness into a shot of the suitors sleeping in the banqueting hall, then cut to a shot of Odysseus standing by the French windows in the music-room. He lights a cigarette as the piano music continues. At the end of the piece, the music stops and we hear the sound of horses, metal clanking, soldiers marching, and men’s voices in the distance as Odysseus looks out of the window and tells the story of how he trained in archery throughout his childhood in order to win Penelope’s hand. After a pause, he says “I don’t expect you to wait for me”: halfway through this line we cut to Penelope, sitting at the piano. She asks “When will you be back?”, and the camera pans back to the French windows, now open: Odysseus is not there, and we hear the sea, rather than the sounds of military preparation.

This sequence both represents and induces a subjective experience of being unstuck in time; in it, *waiting* positions Penelope, and us, in a mixed and multiple “now” made of memory and anticipation. The long-take technique and the way the different phases of the soundtrack cause different spaces and times to overlap means that the audience experiences Penelope’s memory and her present-day reality as a single, undifferentiated, space and time, a “here and now” which is both Penelope’s present-day aloneness and her past with Odysseus, as well as her fantasies of a future reunion – but a future which is itself a return to the past, a return *of* the past.

This manifold *now* of waiting for a lover recalls the Smiths song ‘How Soon is Now?’, where the singer, Morrissey, waits for the moment when he will “meet somebody who really loves me”, and asks an unknown interlocutor: “When you say it’s going to happen *now*, when exactly do you mean? / ‘Cause I’ve already waited too long, and all my hope is gone”. Dinshaw, who titled her book after the song, provides a reading of Morrissey’s “now” in her introduction:

“When I meet somebody who really loves me”: this “now” is linked indissolubly to other moments past and future, and thereby to other people, other situations, other worlds; this *now* is impossible to delimit as a single discrete unit, yes, but exactly because it is so complex and vascular, it can prompt us to think and experience time differently. [13]

Ferris’s film similarly uses the complex, vascular “now” of waiting, as well as the transtemporal power of the classical, to produce an affective-temporal effect – to enable the viewer to experience time differently. The psychological state of waiting becomes an allegory for the temporality of the classical – or rather, the two allegorise and complete each other. Just as Penelope comes unstuck in time as she waits, as memory and desire mix past and future into the *now*, so the classical, in its timelessness, its capacity to be both past and present simultaneously, produces and participates in a complex temporality. Thus *Penelope* produces a different kind of temporality from mainstream historical cinema: a disjointed, asynchronic, mixed temporality. As viewers, we have a visual and bodily experience of this asynchrony – both historical and subjective – as the camera movements and the soundtrack weave times and places together into a mixed “now”, where the film keeps us, spellbound.

Charles Altieri argues that art is valuable for its audiences because it “allows us to dwell in affective states until their power begins to rival reason’s authority”, [14] and we do, precisely, “dwell” in the affective state produced by *Penelope* as our bodies and perceptions become attuned to its dreamy mood and its out-of-joint temporality. [15] This attunement is accomplished, as I will now argue, through the film’s aesthetic, which subverts existing modes of cinematic address to the body in order to retool the viewer’s bodily attachment to the world of the screen.

Penelope deliberately invokes the conventions of the three “body genres” that Linda Williams identifies in her classic 1991 essay on “Film Bodies”: melodrama, horror, and pornography. Williams argues that what these genres

have in common is “the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion” and “the perception that the body of the spectator is caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen”. [16] All three genres aim to produce an intense and direct affective circuit between the bodies on the screen and the bodies of spectators, even risking a kind of merging: the viewer of melodrama weeps with the character, the viewer of pornography orgasms along with the character, the viewer of horror faints as the character dies.

Although *Penelope* draws on Williams's body genres, it translates them into the register and the aesthetics of art film, rerouting the affective circuits that Williams outlines. Its aesthetic positions us in a very different relationship to the events on the screen from a viewer of melodrama, pornography, or horror; in particular, its aesthetic blocks the kinds of direct address to the body that these genres produce.

In one scene about half an hour in, we see Penelope walk into the forest at night and stand looking into the darkness at the edge of a clearing. Odysseus approaches her from behind and kisses her shoulders in a middle-range shot; on the soundtrack, the music fades out to be replaced by the sounds of the forest, Penelope's heartbeat, and her breathing, which gradually becomes more like moaning as Odysseus's embrace continues. Piano music begins again, overlaid on the heartbeat and sighs/moans, as the camera pans down to the leaves on the forest floor; tracks backwards, away from the couple; then pans back up so that we see Odysseus and Penelope, now naked, having sex. The camera circles them from a distance, moving in and out of trees, so that our view of the couple is distanced and periodically obscured by the trees: the browns of the dead leaves on the ground, the pale skins of the couple, and the darker grey/brown of the tree, unify the composition of the shots in a limited and harmonious colour palette.



Figure 4.

Thus, although we see Penelope and Odysseus having sex, we are positioned to view this in a non-pornographic mode, to achieve an aesthetic distance from the content of what we are seeing, rather than to align our bodily responses with those we see on the screen. In this scene and throughout the film, shots are often not framed in a way that emphasises the emotions or sensations of the human body. Even when human figures are in shot, we are often asked to attend to them as surface or line, rather than reading bodies as the bearers of emotion or sensation to be mimicked. As bodies become elements in the overall composition of a beautiful shot, distinctions cease to be drawn between human figures and backgrounds.

It is this attention to surface and setting that makes the film *moody*. Altieri defines “moods” (one of his four sub-types of affect) as “modes of feeling where the sense of subjectivity becomes diffuse and sensation merges into something close to atmosphere, something that seems to pervade an entire scene or situation;” [17] that is, a “mood” is a mode of feeling where there is no strong distinction between inside and outside, body and setting, figure and ground. Thus, where in melodrama, pornography and horror, affects are produced in the viewer's body through mimicry of the sensations represented as taking place inside a female body on-screen, here affects are produced by compositional strategies – or, even more importantly, by the foregrounding of composition as that to which we should attend, rather than (as in mainstream body genres) using naturalised compositions that foreground the sensations being represented rather than the mode of their representation. In *Troy*, the affective circuit between audience and screen is generated by emotion and aims at a conjunctive relationship to the past,

smoothing over the originary anachrony of the viewing experience. *Penelope*, by contrast, uses mood to produce a diffuse sense of subjectivity which is not distributed across discrete characters or emotions, but instead suffuses the film's world, its visual and musical compositions. Instead of using emotion to conjoin a specific past and a specific present "now", Ferris's film uses mood to explore anachrony itself, positioning its viewers to dwell in a very different affective temporality.

In order to position us to dwell in this way, however, the film relies on a particular set of representational conventions, which are highly gendered. The "body genres" that *Penelope* subverts all rely on the spectacle of the female body – especially the suffering or ecstatic female body – and *Penelope* does too. The aesthetic achievement of the film, and of its male director, is built on the display of the suffering female body.

Indeed, Ferris's film consciously repeats and reinscribes a Classical tradition of the aesthetic representation of the female body. Beautifully composed shots of draped female bodies align his film with classical sculpture and with Victorian classical painting, turning the female body into a statue, an object of aesthetic contemplation. Ferris signals his awareness of this in a memory/dream sequence where Odysseus and Penelope playfully fight over a book that Odysseus is reading. Penelope asks what it is called, and Odysseus answers *Pygmalion*: the story of a male artist who falls in love with his own creation, a sculpture of a woman, and succeeds in bringing it to life.

The moment when Ferris most explicitly interrogates the representation of the suffering female body, however, is the rape scene/ dream sequence at the centre of the film. This scene brings together all three of Williams's body genres, combining the sexuality of pornography and the weeping female face of melodrama with the violence of horror. It functions initially to disrupt the film's moody aesthetic, but is, finally, reincorporated into it.

The sequence comes after a scene where the maidservants have found Penelope's naked body in the woods (after her sexual encounter with Odysseus) and carried her home to bed. It opens with a series of close-ups of the maidservants' faces as they discuss the restlessness of the suitors and their fear that it will disturb Penelope; dialogue, in Croatian, forms fragments of intelligible words and phrases against a background buzz of whispering women's voices. The women decide to go into the banquet hall to try and calm the suitors, but instead they are raped by the suitors in the most conventionally shot sequence in the film. In the rape scene, in strong contrast to the *Penelope*/Odysseus sex scene, bodies are clearly differentiated from backgrounds; mid-range and close-up shots centre on sexualised parts of the women's bodies (mouths, breasts, hips and buttocks) and are framed to show the body as bearer of violent sensation and emotion; the screams of the women on the soundtrack are synchronised with the visual track. [18] These screams are overlaid onto a tense, atonal musical score and as we cut to a scene of Penelope alone in bed, the soundtrack continues but becomes muffled, as if Penelope is hearing the rape from another room in the house. As we pan slowly up Penelope's body and see blood between her thighs, as if she is registering the injuries of the maids on her own body, the screams become indistinguishable from the other sounds in the score, one instrument among many contributing to the backing music.



Figure 5.

This, then, is the scene in the film which addresses the audience in the most conventional and direct way: it has the least insistence on aesthetic distance. But it is also the scene where the suffering female body is most

explicitly aestheticised. The scene also presents the suffering female body as a problem for interpretation, especially when, in the next sequence, we see the women alive and well, suggesting that the rape scene may have been Penelope's dream.

Ferris's film clearly questions the conventions of gendered representation and the aestheticisation of female suffering which it inherits, but in doing so it has also to reinscribe them. In order to think through what is at stake here, I will now read the ending of the film, which is where Ferris intervenes most noticeably in those conventions.

At the end of the film, Penelope sets up a contest for the suitors: they must string Odysseus's bow, which only he can string, and then shoot an arrow from it through twelve axes. But then she herself strings it and fires it, not through the axes but at the suitors, killing them all. Odysseus then appears, wearing his army fatigues; Penelope takes his hand and leads him to bed, where they lie down together, fully clothed and without speaking, and the camera tracks through the maids' bedroom, past rows of empty beds, out of the house, to end the film with a shot of tree branches against the sky.

The ending of Ferris's film derives a large part of its force from its *difference* from the Homeric story. At the end of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus returns to Ithaca in disguise, and Penelope sets up the contest of the bow (as in the film). In Homer, however, the disguised Odysseus wins the contest and uses the bow to kill all the suitors: he then hangs all the maids for sleeping with the suitors. Penelope has one final test for him – she offers to drag their marriage bed out of the bedroom, but Odysseus knows this is impossible as he carved the bed out of a tree trunk which is the central support for their house. Odysseus points this out, Penelope is satisfied with his identity, and they go to bed. The following day, Odysseus is reunited with his father Laertes; the families of the suitors seek revenge, but Athena reconciles them, restoring order to Ithaca.

For Odysseus's killing of the maids, Ferris substitutes Penelope's killing of the suitors; and for the complex political and familial web of violence, revenge, testing, and reconciliation which ends Homer's version, Ferris substitutes a conjugal reunion. Penelope and Odysseus are conjoined, and this conjunction also restores us to a time which is no longer out of joint, ending the film's temporal imbalance along with its narrative trajectory by restoring equilibrium. [19] There is no more waiting; the layered temporality of the film is resolved as Penelope and Odysseus finally inhabit the same temporal sphere, the same "here and now" – but a here and now which is also the "forever" of marriage or the "happy-ever-after" of the fairytale.

Yet this version cannot help but be haunted by previous versions of the story. The final shot of the trees reminds us of the conversation between Penelope and Odysseus about the marriage bed, which is missing from Ferris's account; the absent bodies of the maids remind us of Homer's version of the story, especially since the film has already posed a question about what has happened to the maids. Were the deaths of the maids a dream, or is it a dream that they were restored to life? Is this reunion between Penelope and Odysseus truly the end of Penelope's story, or is it just another dream – Ferris's dream of a better ending to the story? Did Penelope kill the suitors, or did Odysseus kill the maids? Which is the dream, and which the reality?

In fact, this is not quite the right question, because throughout the film Ferris has refused to draw strong distinctions between dream, memory, fantasy, and reality, or between historical and mythic time. Indeed, both versions of the Penelope story exist in cultural memory, in the dream that is the mythical past; both versions have been told; and although the film shows only one version on the screen, that version is structured by, and thus inescapably haunted by, the other version(s). At the end of the film, then, Ferris's rewriting of the Penelope story and Homer's original version coexist in the mind of the viewer.

This palimpsestic historical structure is both the achievement and the risk of the film. Inviting in Homer – as well as Virgil and James Joyce and Margaret Atwood and the myriad other writers who have told the Penelope story over three millennia – opens the film onto a vast network of transtemporal attachments and investments, and thus onto an unpredictable range of effects in the audience. For example, early in the film, a shot of Penelope's weaving dissolves into a shot of Odysseus's ship at sea. In juxtaposing, and thus implicitly comparing, Penelope's domestic tasks with Odysseus's nautical adventures, this dissolve can be seen as a visual translation of Dorothy Parker's poem "Penelope":

In the pathway of the sun,
In the footsteps of the breeze,
Where the world and sky are one,
He shall ride the silver seas,
He shall cut the glittering wave.

I shall sit at home, and rock;
Rise, to heed a neighbour's knock;
Sip my tea, and snip my thread;
Bleach the linen for my bed.

They will call him brave.

Parker's poem insists on an equivalence between Penelope's qualities in the feminine, domestic sphere – endurance, fortitude, and intelligence – and those of Odysseus in the masculine, public sphere. This equivalence can also be seen in the *Odyssey* itself: scholars have pointed out that Penelope is given many of the same epithets as Odysseus in the poem. As explicated by Winkler in "Penelope's Cunning – and Homer's," a reading I encountered as an undergraduate and wholeheartedly adopted, the *Odyssey* is a poem about a ruthless (*schetlios*), cool-headed (*ekhephron*) man and a ruthless (*schetlia*), cool-headed (*ekhephron*) woman: about the different capacities for action each is granted by virtue of their different positions in a profoundly patriarchal society, but also about their ability to build a marriage characterised by mutual respect and equal agency. Odysseus needs to draw on all his

resources over the course of ten years, to get home to Ithaca; Penelope, meanwhile, has drawn on all her resources over the course of ten years to make sure that there is still a home to get to. The achievements of each would be meaningless without the other, and Penelope is, as Winkler puts it, “the best wife for the best husband”. [20] This reading of the *Odyssey* sees it as eroticising equality, two and a half thousand years before second-wave feminism articulated that goal.

While I would in any case be bringing this version of Odysseus and Penelope to my reading of Ferris's film, the intertextuality with Parker's poem means that this is not simply an idiosyncratic reaction. Rather, Parker's version of Odysseus and Penelope has been invited into the network of texts, pasts, and attachments that is involved in any viewing of the film: Parker too is an active participant in the production of the affective circuit which links us to the film, and her version of the Penelope story also haunts the film.

Yet this version in particular sits uncomfortably with the central approach that the film takes in its exploration of the reception of Penelope. Ferris's film uses the Penelope story, among other things, to explore the problem of the aestheticisation of female suffering. This is, indeed, a problem inherited from the classical past, and one which the male artist (in particular) needs to negotiate in thinking through the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of his relation to the past, and to the gendered conventions of representation that he inescapably inherits. But the decision to use the Penelope story to explore these questions risks becoming another kind of palimpsest, one much more like Petersen's substitution of “cousin” for “lover” in *Troy*. In using the prudent, ruthless, cool-headed Penelope – someone who is emphatically *not* Pygmalion's Galatea – to embody the questions he is interested in, Ferris risks constructing the suffering of women as the timeless truth of the classical tradition and, in the process, obscuring the other possibilities for attachment that that tradition has to offer.

Historical cinema works with an “out of joint” temporality of viewing characterised by both disjunction (we experience the past as separate from us) and conjunction: we are attached to the past world of the film, often through some factor cast as “timeless” which precipitates us into a mixed “now,” in which both the represented past and the present time of viewing participate. Where mainstream historical cinema tends to use emotion to maximise conjunction, *Penelope* uses mood to explore the experience of asynchrony itself, and interrogates the transtemporal structures which produce our relationships to the past.

However, it would be too simplistic to see *Troy* as purely on the side of conjunction and *Penelope* as purely on the side of disjunction, and to evaluate them negatively and positively accordingly. Both films, in fact, involve movements and moments of both conjunction and disjunction. *Troy*, after all, gives us an experience of disjunction by spectacularising historical difference; and *Penelope*, too, conjoins us to its “mythic” space and time. The question, in Bruno Latour's terms (cited earlier), is whether we are “well-attached.”

Peterson attaches us to the narrative world of *Troy* by constructing the (modernised and heterosexualised) emotional dynamics of the characters as timeless, while Ferris invites us into the moody, suffused world of *Penelope* via our immersion in her subjective experience of waiting, which in turn provides us with an embodied experience of the timelessness of the classical. However, because the “classical” is also represented in the film through the aestheticised, suffering female body, Ferris risks presenting female suffering as timeless truth. Just as Peterson's deployment of a heteronormative emotional dynamic in *Troy* overwrites other, pre-existing, possibilities of attachment to the past, Ferris's use of Penelope to investigate the Classical obsession with women's suffering may be experienced as overwriting existing attachments to Penelope.

This should sound a cautionary note in relation to our attempts to analyse the workings of emotion, and of affect more broadly, in historical cinema. Affect, I have argued, is deployed in historical cinema to produce distinctive modes of temporal experience via the production of circuits of attachment. However, this process is always and necessarily unpredictable, since each viewer brings her own existing emotional, (inter)textual, and temporal attachments to the experience of viewing. Our analyses of historical cinema, then, cannot simply locate the generation of affect in the formal features of films themselves, including (as in Linda Williams's essay) their structures of address to the viewer's body. They must also and always take into account the vicissitudes of asynchronous spectatorship.

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.20.

[2] Derrida, *Specters*, pp.20.

[3] Both disjuncture and conjunction necessarily coexist within individual films, as viewing historical film involves connection across distance – both conjoining (without which there is no viewing) and disjuncture (without which there is no historical difference to be viewed). Thus disjuncture is not necessarily more “radical” or conjunction necessarily more conservative. However, different ways of doing the disjoining and conjoining have different affective, political and textual effects.

[4] Rita Felski, “‘Context Stinks!’,” *New Literary History* 42.4 (2011): pp.573–591, 575; Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), and my forthcoming paper “Temporal Turbulence: Reception Studies(‘) Now,” in *Antipodean Antiquities: Classical Reception Down Under*, ed. Marguerite Johnson (Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[5] Felski, “‘Context Stinks!’,” pp.589, citing Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.21.

[6] Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp.17.

[7] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, pp.4–5.

[8] Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca, N.Y and London: Cornell UP, 2003), pp.2.

[9] See, for example, the fan blogger Cleolinda's very popular post “Troy in Fifteen Minutes,” [http://cleolinda.livejournal.com/99710.html].

[10] Rosalie Higson in *The Australian*, quoted on the cover of the DVD of *Penelope*.

[11] “Mythic time and space” is from the “Film Info” section on the film's website, where it appears in quotation marks but the quotation is not attributed: “Penelope,” <http://penelopa.com.au/en/>. Ferris has been described as “a pioneer of the global resurgence in ‘one take’ cinema:” in relation to his films *The Kitchen* and *Ascension*. *Penelope* has been screened at film festivals and art galleries in Australia and Europe, and is available on DVD and/or via licensed streaming from Art Film (<https://www.artfilms.com.au/item/penelope>).

[12] See, for example, Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.33, referring to Gadamer's argument that “the ‘classical’ is something raised above the vicissitudes of changing times and changing tastes. It is immediately accessible” (*Truth and Method*, 2001: 299); Duncan Kennedy, *Antiquity and the Meanings of Time: A Philosophy of Ancient and*

Modern Literature (London and New York: I B Tauris, 2013), pp.37.

[13] Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, pp.4.

[14] Altieri, *Aesthetic of the Affects*, pp.130.

[15] I borrow the term “attunement,” once more, from Rita Felski, for example in her unpublished keynote lecture “Attachment Theory,” *Literary Studies Convention*, University of Wollongong, 9 July 2015.

[16] Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,” *Film Quarterly* 44:4 (1991): pp.4.

[17] Altieri, *Aesthetic of the Affects*, pp.2.

[18] Not all the violent sequences in the film are shot in this way: later we see the (non-sexualised) slaughter of the male suitors, and this returns to the slow-paced, non-naturalistic, heavily soundtracked style of the rest of the film.

[19] I refer to Tzvetan Todorov's definition of narrative: “the shift from one equilibrium to another... , separated by a period of imbalance.” Tzvetan Todorov, “Structural Analysis of Narrative,” in *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Modernism through Poststructuralism*, ed. R. C. Davis (New York: Longman, 1986), pp.328.

[20] John J. Winkler, “Penelope's Cunning – and Homer's,” in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.161.

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